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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HERMOSILLO 000228

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MX](#)

SUBJECT: MAJOR PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS VISIT SONORA

REF: A) HERMOSILLO 0082; B) HERMOSILLO 0036

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11. (SBU) Summary. All three major presidential candidates campaigned in Sonora over the last two weeks, with none of them making a big splash. The calculated distancing of Governor Bours from Robert Madrazo was obvious. However, the Governor still studiously avoided an irrevocable split with Madrazo and the Institutional Revolution Party (PRI) as -- apparently for his own long-term ambitions -- he strives to demonstrate that he can score gains in Sonora for the PRI "reformist" wing. National Action Party (PAN) candidate Felipe Calderon appeared to be holding his own in Sonora despite factional fighting in the state and local party organizations. Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) of Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD) generated excitement in rural southern Sonora, but local candidates from the PRD and its Workers Party (PT) ally suddenly have been disqualified en masse from running. End Summary.

PRI -- MADRAZO'S SONORA VISIT GOES FROM BAD TO WORSE

12. (SBU) PRI presidential hopeful Roberto Madrazo returned to Sonora on May 17, flying in to Hermosillo, and visiting Nogales and San Luis Rio Colorado for campaign events. Sonora Governor Eduardo Bours, the state's top PRI politician, pointedly ignored his party's national candidate again (Ref A). Bours did not greet Madrazo at the airport or attend a meeting of PRI supporters in Hermosillo's Expo Forum, which only attracted 400 participants.

13. (U) The PRI Sonora organization did arrange a rally for Madrazo in Nogales, but it too reportedly drew only 500, and ended with Carlos Daniel Fernandez Guevara, the head of PRI Sonora, and several local candidates walking out. They were reacting to the presence of Samuel Moreno Teran, a long-time PRIista who is running to become a federal deputy on the PRI-PVEM (Green Ecologist) alliance endorsed by the national PRI (but not the local PRI organization). Moreno and other PRI-PVEM candidates had not been invited because of their differences with the Governor and PRI Sonora, and the situation was exacerbated when Madrazo gave Moreno the microphone. By the time Madrazo reached San Luis Rio Colorado, no PRI Sonora candidates were accompanying him.

TOUGH POLITICS IN SONORA

14. (U) Governor Bours and the PRI Sonora organization -- despite the obvious snubs -- were careful not to openly declare a break with the national candidate. Bours publicly blamed the resulting "disrespect" to Madrazo on maneuvering by his rival, former governor Manlio Beltrones, who (he said) had put the PRI-PVEM candidates up to their disruptive appearance at the

rally. Bours suggested that Moreno and Guadalupe Garcia Benitez, who are sitting PRI local deputies in the Sonora Congress, should be expelled from PRI for their PVEM affiliations.

¶15. (U) On May 19, in an incident that some see as a form of political revenge, the Sonora judicial police (PJE) detained Reynaldo Castillo Lopez, an active Madrazo political operative in Sonora and leader of the Madrazo Foundation. The arrest was made on the basis of a 1997 apprehension order for alleged aggravated robbery of a wholesale automotive parts factory. Castillo Lopez was released without being charged the next day. He claimed to have been mistreated in prison and declared that he would not be intimidated.

WHAT THE GOVERNOR MIGHT HAVE IN MIND

¶16. (SBU) On May 15, Enrique Palafox (protect), the newly-appointed Sonora state Secretary of Government, told the PO that Governor Bours would continue to distinguish himself from Madrazo, "a PRI dinosaur", without disavowing him completely. He said that Bours wanted to maintain control of local PRI candidate selection and, as a member of the PRI "reformist" wing, had very different ideas from Madrazo about directions the party and Mexico should take.

¶17. (SBU) Deeper into the conversation, Palafox said that the intra-party politicking for the July 2 elections represented a gamble for a possible run by Bours at the Mexican presidency in ¶2012. That hope was premised, he said, on a strong showing by PRI in the Sonora elections, especially victories in the Hermosillo municipal race and other city halls contests. PAN mayors currently hold office in Hermosillo and Obregon, the two largest cities in Sonora. Palafox said that PRI was closer in the polls now than at a comparable point before the last elections and had good chances for wins in both races.

¶18. (SBU) The local PAN party's open bickering on its Hermosillo mayoral candidate has fueled this PRI optimism. PAN has

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confused voters with the rise, seeming anointment and then casting off of several Hermosillo mayoral contenders (prominent businessmen Javier Gandara Magana and Edmundo Briseno) before settling on a final candidate: Rodolfo Flores Hurtado, former city treasurer. On May 28, Flores Hurtado won the unanimous backing for the nomination of a PAN convention which was, however, boycotted by representatives of the PAN party's national executive committee. His candidacy is seen as reflecting the continuing influence of incumbent mayor Maria Dolores del Rio. Flores Hurtado becomes the clear PAN candidate relatively late in the campaign and will need to heal some of the bruising inflicted on other PAN factions to stay ahead of PRI candidate for Hermosillo mayor, Ernesto Gandara Camou.

PRD -- AMLO WELCOME IN THE SOUTH, BUT PRD SONORA IN SHAMBLES

¶19. (U) PRD presidential candidate Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO) traveled north from Sinaloa to return to Sonora on May 18, focusing this campaign swing on the southern, rural part of the state where PRD has its greatest strength (Ref B). Southern Sonora has a history of agrarian reform in which larger holdings were broken up and distributed to small farmers, and AMLO's populism resonates well there. He reportedly was warmly greeted in rallies in Huatabampo, Navajoa, Obregon and Guaymas, after having attracted larger crowds in Sinaloa, a highly agricultural state. He flew onward out of Hermosillo the evening of May 18, but met only with -- and briefly -- local PRD officials.

¶10. (U) The PRD-PT coalition in Sonora is reeling from the May 20-21 unprecedented disqualification from the elections of 43 of its candidates by the Sonora's State Electoral Council (CEE). Twenty-one district candidates for the state congress, 3 plurinominal candidates, and 10 mayoral candidates were barred from registration because of alleged "negligence" and irregularities ranging from lack of documents required under the

electoral code, failure to respect parity of the sexes in party committees and candidacies, and non-compliance with residency requirements. PRD lawyers are appealing and Governor Bours himself has said publicly that he will look into the matter.

PAN - CALDERON IN QUICK CAMPAIGN STOP

¶11. (U) PAN presidential candidate Felipe Calderon Hinojosa - who has not yet campaigned heavily in Sonora -- also visited the state's southern region on May 25, drawing (reportedly) over 4000 supporters to a rally in Navajoa, and then meeting with smaller groups in Obregon. He reportedly emphasized that he would support social programs that benefit the most vulnerable groups in Mexican society, but needs to have the support of the federal Congress to do so. Word has also leaked that Governor Bours met with Calderon for coffee in Obregon, a significant courtesy in light of the Governor's failure to find time for Madrazo.

¶12. (SBU) Comment: While the presidential candidates are visiting Sonora with greater frequency, the campaign locally does not yet seem very intense. More posters and, on most days, most local media coverage, is devoted to local candidates and local intra-party feuds than the national race. Nevertheless, at this point PAN candidate Calderon appears out ahead in Sonora of a largely ignored Madrazo and Lopez Obrador, whose campaign is under-organized (and undermined). The main story remains the role of Governor Bours and his bid to demonstrate mastery in the July elections of Sonora politics in a bid for greater national prominence. End Comment.

CLARKE